(d) the steps Government have taken to popularise the scheme in tribal and rural areas of the State?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (d) There is no specific scheme for development of medicinal and aromatic plants in Bihar. However, some central Ministries/ Departments/Institutions are implementing research and development projects as well as programmes on popularisation of medicinal and aromatic plants. These include: micropropagation, development of agro-technologies, collection and conservation of medicinal and aromatic plants in herbal garden as well as generation of high quality and genetically uniform planting material. Other programmes under implementation with promising results are training and technology transfer to farmers and entrepreneurs alongwith technical advice for cultivation and processing and providing relevant literature for popularisation of medicinal and aromatic plants in Bihar. About 40 farmers have received training.

Bio-prospecting of Biological Wealth

1195. SHRI SITARAM KESRI: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any multi-institutional project has been initiated to catalogue and bio-prospect the biological wealth in East Himalayas and the South-Western Ghats; and

(b) if so, what are the details of this project, its financial implications and the benefits proposed to be derived from this project?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A multi-institutional (13 in number) collaborative programme on Bioprospecting of Biological Wealth has been supported by Department of Biotechnology for characterization, inventorization and conservation of Biodiversity of North Eastern Himalayas and Southern Western Ghats. The programme would help in cataloguing and characterizing the economically important species of the region. Studies on the genetic diversity of the species existing in these regions have been undertaken. The endangered plant species would be conserved and the important genes and molecules identified and characterized for potential use. The programme has started from October, 1997 with an outlay of Rs. 11.53 crores for 5 years.

Scientific Encyclopaedia Titled "THE WEALTH OF INDIA"

1196. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Institute of Science Communication (NISCOM) under CSIR has been publishing a Scientific encyclopedia named "The Wealth of India" since 1948;

(b) whether it is also a fact that an organisation named Asian Health and Allied Data (AHEAD) has been collaborating with National Institute of Science Communication (NISCOM) in bringing out the CD-ROM version of the above publication;

(c) if so, the details of the understanding between National Institute of Science Communication (NISCOM) and Asian Health and Allied Data (AHEAD) and the legal status of Asian Health and Allied Data (AHEAD); and

(d) the owner of the copyright version of the CD-ROM version?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Asian Health and Allied Data (AHEAD) is a consortium of 9 organisations of which 8 are

Governmental and 1 is a non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). These organisations belong to 7 Asian countries viz. Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and Mangolia. AHEAD is registered under the Indian Societies' Registration Act. The consortium seeks to bring out and market Asian Health and other related information in modern electronic format based on inputs received from participating members. Member organisations contribute to AHEAD, information and database inputs over which they hold copyright. AHEAD prepares the CD-ROM of the data and holds copyright ownership of it, for which it pays royalties to the contributing organisation. National Institute of Science Communication (NISCOM) contributes two database to AHEAD i.e. Wealth of India and Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Abstracts. The AHEAD is supported by funds from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canada and NISCOM as lead organisation member has committed to provide infrastructural and a limited technical manpower support.

Ecpenditure on R & D

1197. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that inspite of best intentions and declaration, growth in the expenditure on Research and Development as percentage of GDP has been almost stagnant for over the past five years;

(b) if so, the details thereof for the last five years;

(c) the steps taken during Eighth Plan period to boost R&D activities and the results thereof; and

(d) the details of agenda of action for substantial step up of R&D activities during 1998-99 and Ninth Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) According to the latest available official statistics, the expenditure on Research & Development (R&D) in India as percentage of Gross National Product (GNP) has been around 0.8% during past few years. But in absolute terms, India's R&D expenditure has increased over the years from Rs. 3974.17 Crores in 1990-91 to Rs. 6821.02 Crores in 1994-95. This compilation does not take into account the expenditure that might have been incurred by other entities, including businesses and companies which have not applied for recognition of their in-house R&D units by Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR).

(c) Government have introduced several fiscal incentives and other support measures from time to time to boost R&D activities in the country. These include:

Income tax relief of R&D expenditure.

Weighted Tax deduction for sponsored research.

Customs Duty exemption on goods imported for use in Government funded R&D projects.

Five year tax Holiday for commercial R&D companies.

Excise duty waiver for three years on goods produced based on indigenously developed technologies and duly patented in any one of the countries in European Union and in USA or Japan or in both.

Accelerated Depreciation Allowance on new plant and machinery set up based on indigenous technology.

Price control exemption on domestic R&D based bulk drugs.

Increasing the number of National Awards for outstanding R&D achievements and commercialization of public funded R&D.